

Here again the prose of Crabbe's career is lit up for an instant by a flash of poetry; for this decision was made by him on a gloomy winter's day in 1779, on the bleak Marsh Hill above Aldborough, as he stood and gazed at a muddy pool there, called 'the Leech-pond'. On that spot, with as much 'Resolution and Independence\*' as Wordsworth's own Leech-gatherer, Crabbe determined to stake all on his poetry. The next April, aged twenty-five, with three pounds in his pocket, he sailed on a smack for London, where, just ten years before, Chatterton had likewise sought his fortune, and found his fate. Fortunately Chatterton was not even a name to Crabbe until after his arrival.

In that Purgatory he suffered a whole year. His journal makes moving reading, with its mixture of a simplicity that hopes to conquer the world of letters by means of Epistles to Prince William Henry and Epistles from the Devil, and a courage that refuses to despair at the obdurate deafness of peers and publishers alike, of North and Shelburne, Dodsley and Becket; even when the writer is reduced to fourpence halfpenny in the world. Only at moments there is wrung from him a cry of wretchedness.

'Oh Sally, how I want you!' Summer came. Amid its heats he watched the flames of the Gordon Riots licking up the walls of Newgate. A barren winter followed; then a hopeless spring. A debtors' gaol was

gaping                               for                               him,  
when he played his last card and wrote an  
appeal                               to  
Burke. He left it at Burke's door, together  
with                               a                               copy  
of his poem, *The Library*; then in the  
anguish                               of                               his  
suspense paced up and down Westminster  
Bridge                               (again  
we think of Wordsworth) all night long.  
That                               night                               the  
tide had turned.

Struck by the letter (as well he might be),  
still more by  
the man himself, Burke took instant  
action, although